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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the 1997 National Survey of America's Families to examine child care patterns for young children in the United States. The paper examines three general features of children's early care and education participation: (1) primary care arrangements, classified as center-based care, family child care, relative care, nanny or babysitter, and parent-only; (2) number of hours in nonparental care; and (3) number of nonparental arrangements children participate in on a regular basis each week, and the percentage of children using two or more such arrangements. Major findings indicate that more than two-thirds of children who are under age 5 and not in school experience nonparental care. Primary care providers shift from parents and relatives to center-based care as children get older. The time spent in nonparental care increases with child's age. Children are more likely to be in two or more nonparental arrangements as they near school entry. Income and parental employment are interrelated factors associated with patterns of early care and education. Tables with basic demographic information about the children and responding parents in the national survey sample are appended. (Contains 12 references.) (KB)

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Assessing the New Federalism
An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Social Policies

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Child TRENDS

Assessing the New Federalism
An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Social Policies

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This paper is part of the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* project, a multiyear project to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

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About the Series

Assessing the New Federalism is a multiyear Urban Institute project designed to analyze the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states, focusing primarily on health care, income security, employment and training programs, and social services. Researchers monitor program changes and fiscal developments. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies changes in family well-being. The project aims to provide timely, nonpartisan information to inform public debate and to help state and local decisionmakers carry out their new responsibilities more effectively.

Key components of the project include a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia, available at the Urban Institute's Web site (http://www.urban.org). This paper is one in a series of occasional papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

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Executive Summary

By the time they enter kindergarten, most children have already had experiences with a variety of nonparental caregivers in either home-based or center-based child care settings (Hofferth et al. 1998). Children's use of and experiences in early care and education are influenced by a variety of interrelated family and community factors, including the quality and availability of care. Certainly, income and aspects of parental employment play key roles in child care patterns. In addition to serving as a support for parental employment, however, parents, even when they are not employed, may enroll children in nonparental care arrangements. For example, parents may use such arrangements to pursue education or search for work (activities that still may be seen as supports for parental employment), but they may also use such arrangements in an effort to enhance children's positive development and school readiness. Indeed, research confirms that participation in early care and education settings is associated with enhanced cognitive and language development, and emerging literacy (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2000; Zill et al. 1995).

The results presented in this paper show that children are more likely to participate in nonparental care settings when their responding parent (the person who responded to the survey as the adult most knowledgeable about the child) is employed. However, even when their responding parent is not employed, between 44 and 57 percent of young children (and even higher percentages when three- to five-year olds are examined separately) participate in nonparental care settings, depending on family income. These results highlight the dual role that early care and education serves in the lives of children and families—both as a support for parental employment and, especially for children age three and older, as an opportunity to participate in settings with social and educational resources that can prepare them for school. The results also underscore patterns of child care use that differ according to family resources, with children from higher-income families—regardless of their responding parent's employment status—more likely to use center-based care.

Data and Methods

This report uses data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) to investigate how young children's experiences in early care and education differ across age groups and across families with different needs for nonparental care and resources to pay for care. The work described here extends previous child care reports in the *Assessing the New Federalism* series by examining patterns of early care and education for all children age five and under and not yet in school, irrespective of their parents' employment status.

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This paper describes three aspects of early care and education: the type of care used, the hours spent in care, and the number of nonparental arrangements used. Five types of care are examined: center-based care, relative care, family child care (care by a nonrelative in the provider's home), nannies/babysitters, and parent-only care. In general, this paper focuses on the primary arrangement—the arrangement where a child spends the most hours per week—but also explores whether a child is in any arrangement (regardless of how many hours are spent there per week). To examine the extent of nonparental care, the paper gives a breakdown of both the average hours spent in nonparental care and the percentages of children in full-time nonparental care (35 or more hours per week). Finally, to explore the complexity of children's nonparental care arrangements, the paper describes the percentages of children using two or more arrangements. This paper also explores how these characteristics of early care and education vary by children's ages and by patterns of family income and parental employment.

The data presented provide important information about how nonparental care is used by young children in the years before they enter school. The data do not, however, reveal the preferences families have about early care and education or the constraints that families face when they choose particular types of arrangements, nor are data available on the quality of the settings described here.

Findings

More than two-thirds of all children age five and under and not yet in school experience nonparental care.

- For young children not yet in school, center-based care is the most common primary nonparental arrangement (used by 30 percent of children), followed by relative care (22 percent), family child care (11 percent), and nannies/babysitters (6 percent).
- On average, children who participate in a nonparental arrangement spend 28 hours per week across all nonparental arrangements.
- Less than one-third of all children not yet in school (28 percent) are in nonparental care full-time (35 or more hours per week).
- Almost 40 percent of children in nonparental care use two or more child care arrangements.

In the years before they enter school, children's primary care providers shift from parents and relatives to center-based care.

- Children under age three are less likely than older preschool-age children to be in nonparental care and, when they are, relatives are most often chosen as the primary caretakers. Relatives care for 29 percent of children age one and under, and 21 percent of two-year-olds.

- By age three and continuing through age five, children experience a significant increase in their use of nonparental care and, in particular, their reliance on center-based care as a primary arrangement. Nearly one-third of three-year-olds (30 percent) are in center-based care as a primary arrangement compared with 21 percent of two-year-olds. By the time children reach age five (and are not yet in school), the percentage in center-based care doubles from the percentage at age three (61 percent).
- Family child care providers, nannies, and babysitters are an important source of nonparental care for young children in the years before they enter school, though they are used less frequently as a primary arrangement than relatives and center-based care. Through age three, approximately one-fifth of children are cared for by family child care providers, nannies, and babysitters (15 percent of children under age one, 23 percent of one-year-olds, 20 percent of two-year-olds, and 20 percent of three-year-olds). This proportion decreases to approximately one-tenth of children for four- (11 percent) and five-year-olds (9 percent) not yet in school.

Young children spend more time in nonparental care as they get older.

- The average hours children spend in nonparental care, calculated across all of children's arrangements (except for those in parent-only care) increases gradually across the years before children enter school. For example, among children using nonparental care, children under age one spend 25 hours per week in care compared with 30 hours per week for five-year-olds not yet in school.
- The proportion of children using regular full-time care (35 hours or more per week) also increases gradually across the years before children enter school, with the most substantial increase seen from children under age one (18 percent) to children age one (29 percent). Over one-third (36 percent) of five-year-olds not yet in school are in full-time care.

Children are more likely to be in two or more nonparental arrangements as they near school entry.

- Slightly more than one of four children under age one (26 percent) in nonparental care use two or more arrangements. The percentage rises to over a third of children at age three (37 percent) and rises again to almost half of the children at age five (49 percent).

Income and parental employment are interrelated factors associated with patterns of early care and education. Even when a parent is not employed, however, many children participate in a variety of nonparental care arrangements.

- Infants and toddlers (children age two and under) are more than twice as likely to be in nonparental care if their responding parent is employed, regardless of household income.

- More than one in three infants and toddlers with a responding parent who is not employed regularly spend time in nonparental care. Relative care is the most commonly used nonparental arrangement for these children.
- Among three- to five-year-olds not yet in school, participation in nonparental care is extensive, even when the child's responding parent is not employed. Three of four children (74 percent) from higher-income families (defined as income at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty level) with nonemployed responding parents and 55 percent of children from low-income families (defined as income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) with nonemployed responding parents are in regular nonparental care.
- Three- to five-year-olds not yet in school from higher-income families are more likely than children from low-income families to use center-based care as a primary arrangement, regardless of whether the responding parent is employed.
- Three- to five-year-old children with employed responding parents are likely to spend more hours per week in nonparental arrangements than children with nonemployed responding parents. Nevertheless, children with nonemployed responding parents and who use nonparental care spend as much as 15 hours (for children from higher-income families) and 20 hours (for children from low-income families) per week in nonparental arrangements.
- Among children age five and under (and not yet in school) with nonemployed responding parents, those in low-income families are more likely to have responding parents report that they are "looking for work or in school" while their child is in any center-based care and any relative care than are children from higher-income families.

Early Care and Education: Work Support for Families and Developmental Opportunity for Young Children

Introduction

By the time they enter kindergarten, most children have already had experiences with a variety of nonparental care in either home-based or center-based child care settings (Hofferth et al. 1998; Smith 2000; West, Denton, and Germino-Hausken 2000). The choice of these caregivers and settings as well as the timing, extent, and purpose of nonparental care experiences reflect complex family circumstances and characteristics. Employment patterns, household income, family composition, children's ages and special needs, and local child care supply conditions and cost are just a few of the interrelated factors influencing the use of nonparental care. Certainly, income and aspects of parental employment such as job type, schedule, location, wages, and job stability are key determinants of early care and education patterns for young children. Previous reports in the *Assessing the New Federalism* (ANF) series have documented wide family-level and state-level variations in the types and numbers of arrangements used and the number of hours spent in nonparental care among young children with an employed parent (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonnenstein 2000; Capizzano and Adams 2000 a,b; Ehrle, Adams, and Tout 2000).

In addition to serving as a support for parental employment and employment-related activities, however, parents may enroll children in early care and education in an effort to enhance their children's development and school readiness. Consequently, understanding patterns of nonparental care that reflect a broad range of family needs and choices requires an examination of early care and education for children from all families, irrespective of parents' employment status.

This paper extends previous ANF child care work to examine patterns of early care and education for all children age five and under who have not yet entered school. Nationally representative data are used to look broadly across age groups and across families with different employment patterns (including those with a parent who is not employed) and levels of household income to examine how child care utilization patterns—the types and numbers of nonparental arrangements used and the number of hours children spend in nonparental care—vary for younger and older children from families with different needs for nonparental care and resources to pay for care. Because of the important role that participation in center-based care can play in enhancing children's cognitive school readiness (NICHD Child Care Research Network 2000; Zill et al. 1995), this paper focuses especially on how center-based care use varies across families with different characteristics.

Consistent with previous research, the results highlight the prominence of early care and education in the lives of young children and families, beginning at birth and becoming increasingly prevalent as children near school entry (Hofferth et al. 1991). However, the findings also underscore the low rate of center-based care use among children from low-income families, particularly those with a parent who is not working, when compared with rates for children from higher-income families (regardless of their parents' employment status).

Paper Organization

This paper uses the 1997 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) to examine child care patterns for young children in the United States.[1] According to the NSAF, in 1997 there were approximately 21.7 million children age five and under who had not yet entered school.[2] Information on the children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child's education and health care. Since this respondent was a parent for 97 percent of the children, the term "responding parent" is used to refer to this respondent.[3] Appendix table 1 contains basic demographic information about the children and responding parents in this sample.

This paper examines three general features of children's early care and education participation. First, children's primary arrangement—the type of care arrangement where they regularly spend the most hours per week[4]—is described.[5] Five types of arrangements are considered:

- *center-based care*, which includes child care centers, Head Start, preschool, and before- and after-school programs;[6]
- *family child care*, which refers to care by a nonrelative in the provider's home;
- *relative care*, which is care by a relative in the relative's or in the child's home;
- *nanny or babysitter*, which refers to care by a nonrelative in the child's home; and
- *parent-only care*, which is assigned when the parent does not report using any nonparental arrangements for the child.[7]

The second characteristic considered is the hours children spend in care. In particular, for children spending time in nonparental care, the average weekly hours spent across all care arrangements, including the primary arrangement, are described. The percentages of children who are in full-time care, that is, care for 35 hours per week or more, are also examined. Both the full-time care and average hours in care measures provide an estimate of duration of exposure to nonparental care settings.[8]

Finally, this paper examines the complexity of nonparental care by focusing on the number of nonparental arrangements that children participate in on a regular basis each week and, specifically, on the percentage of children using two or more such arrangements.[9]

Findings are presented in three sections.[10] The first section examines each of the early care and education features described above for all children under age five who have not yet entered school. Next, the findings are broken down by the age of the child to provide a picture of how nonparental care patterns change as children get older and closer to school entry. Finally, to examine how patterns are differentially related to work and economic resources, patterns of care are described for four groups of families (classified by family income and parent's employment status). The responding parent's participation in employment-related activities is also examined, particularly among those responding parents who are not employed.

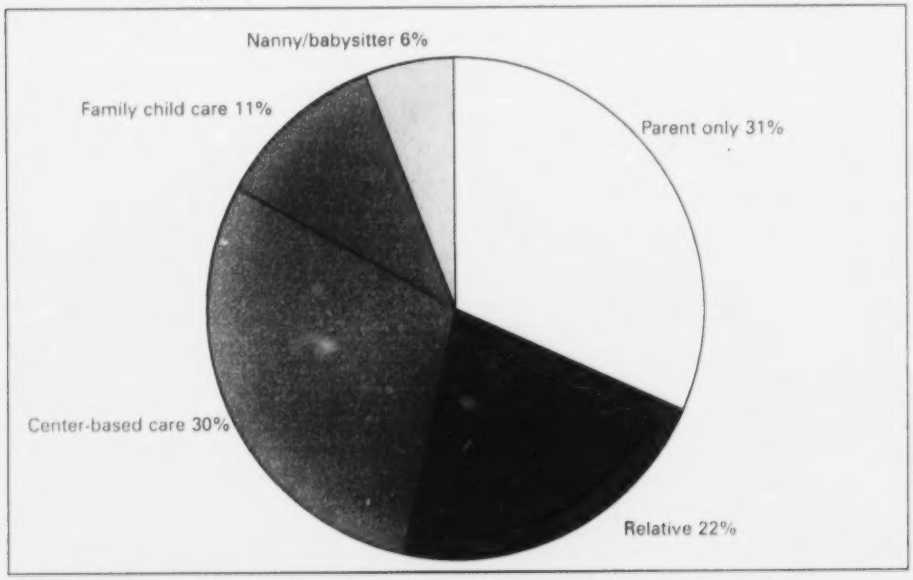
Throughout this paper, it is important to keep in mind that the NSAF data only reveal how nonparental care is used. The survey did not ask parents about their preferences for care or the constraints they encountered when deciding how to arrange care for their children. In addition, no data are available on the quality of the settings described in this report.[11] Thus, the types of experiences children have within their early care and education settings cannot be fully understood through these data. Also, the results presented here provide a descriptive profile of the patterns of early care and education for young children. Further research incorporating multivariate analyses is needed to better understand the various factors that are associated with child care utilization patterns.

Early Care and Education for All Children Age Five and Under and Not in School

Across all children age five and under and not yet in school, more than two of three children (69 percent) use some type of regular nonparental care (appendix table A2). Considering the primary arrangement, that is, the arrangement used for the most hours each week, center-based care is the most commonly used nonparental arrangement (used by 30 percent of all children in this age range and not yet in school), followed by relative care (22 percent), family child care (11 percent), and nannies/babysitters (6 percent) (figure 1). The percentages in each nonparental care arrangement are slightly different from estimates computed from the 1995 National Household Education Survey (NHES) (Hofferth et al. 1998), but the rank ordering of primary arrangements is the same.[12]

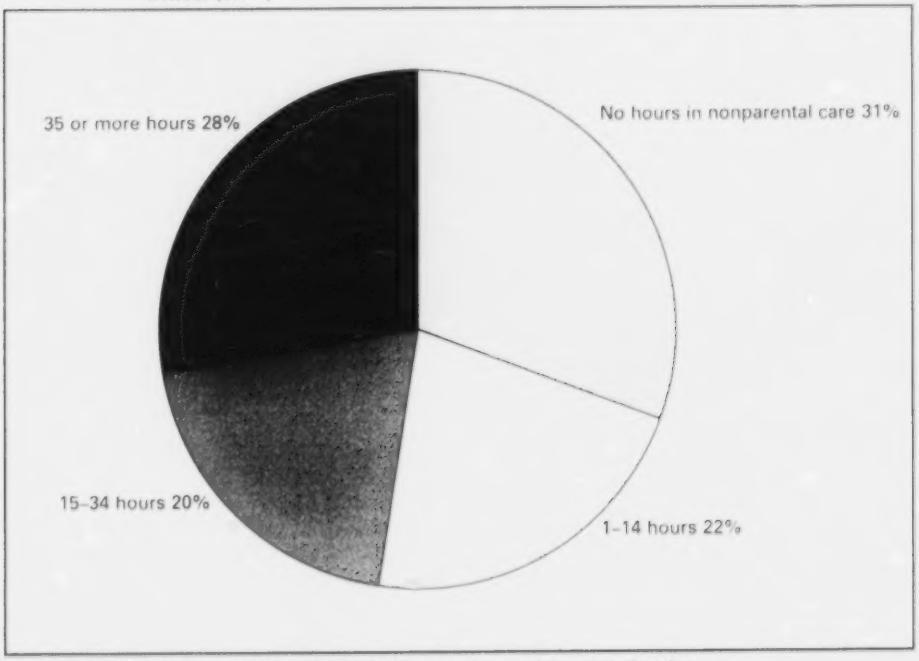
Children spend more hours in center-based care and family child care (26 and 28 hours, respectively) as primary arrangements than they do in relative care or with nannies/babysitters (20 and 17 hours, respectively). On average, children who have a nonparental arrangement spend 28 hours per week across all nonparental arrangements. Less than a third of all children (28 percent) are in nonparental care full-time (35 or more hours per week) (figure 2). Almost 40 percent of children in nonparental care use two or more child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children Age Five and Younger and Not in School (1997)



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Figure 2. Hours Spent in Nonparental Care for Children Age Five and Younger and Not in School (1997)



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 as a result of rounding.

Patterns of Early Care and Education for Children of Different Ages

Children's needs and abilities change dramatically throughout the years before they enter school. Findings from other national surveys demonstrate that children's participation in early care and education reflects these developmental changes (Hofferth et al. 1991, 1998). For example, younger children are more likely than older children to be placed in nonparental care settings involving smaller groups in a home setting—care by relatives, family child care providers, and nannies or babysitters—which might offer opportunities for frequent and sustained adult-child interactions. Older children more frequently participate in nonparental care settings that are more likely to provide access to peers and structured activities—preschool and center-based care. A growing body of research suggests that experiences in such center-based care can influence children's development. This research highlights the positive contribution that participation in preschool and center-based programs can make to children's cognitive and language development (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2000) and emerging literacy (Zill et al. 1995).

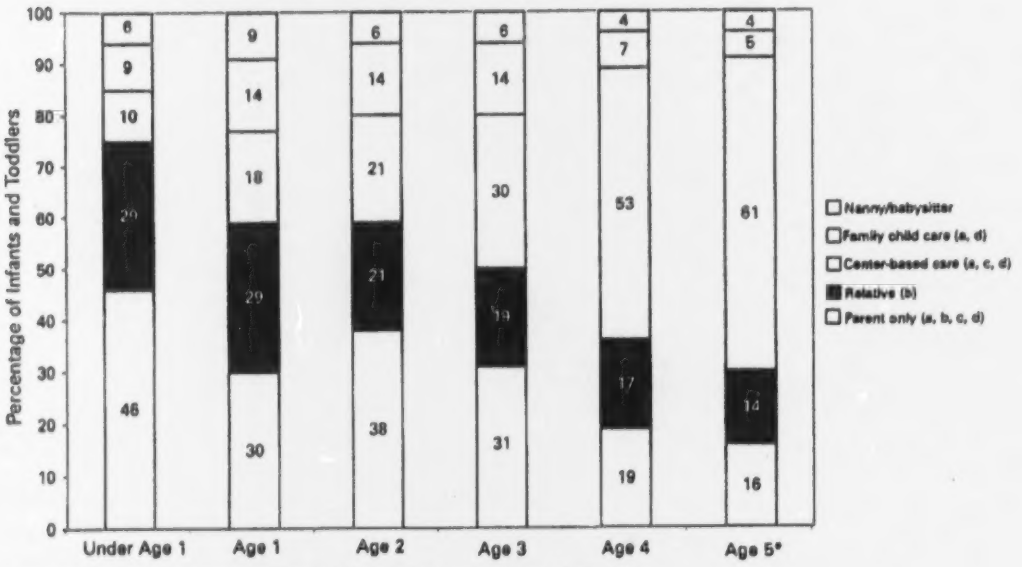
Here, we examine patterns of nonparental care by children's ages to better understand the characteristics of care for younger and older children.[13] In general, the 1997 NSAF findings are consistent with previous research showing substantial increases in the use of nonparental care as children get older. Across the early years, the use of any regular nonparental care increases from 54 percent for children under age one to 69 percent for three-year-olds to 84 percent for five-year-olds not yet in school (appendix table A2).

Primary Arrangements

Looking across care arrangements for young children, it is clear that the primary types of nonparental care shift substantially as children get older (figure 3). In the very early years, a substantial percentage of children are cared for only by their parents. When they are cared for by others, relatives are the most frequently used primary nonparental arrangement. Just under 30 percent of children age one and under are cared for regularly by relatives. By age two, however, the percentage in relative care decreases to 21 percent and remains fairly steady, though declining slightly, throughout the years before children enter school. By age five, 14 percent of young children are being cared for regularly by relatives.

In contrast, center care plays a relatively small role in the lives of very young children, with only 10 percent of children under age one being cared for primarily in these settings. By age one, the percentage increases substantially to 18 percent, then remains about the same for children at age two (21 percent). By age three, however, a dramatic shift begins in the use of center-based care as a primary arrangement. The percentage using primarily center care jumps to 30 percent of three-year olds, then increases again to over half of all four-year-olds (53 percent). By the time children are five (and not yet in school), 61 percent are using center-based care as a primary

Figure 3. Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children Age Five and Younger and Not in School, by Child's Age (1997)



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at p<.05 are noted in the legend (above, right) for the following comparisons of estimates: a = children under age 1 and age 1, b = children age 1 and age 2, c = children age 2 and age 3, d = children age 3 and age 4, e = children age 4 and age 5.
*Children who are age 5 and in school are not included in these estimates.

arrangement (not a significant increase from age four but a significant increase from age three).[14]

Other nonparental arrangements play a smaller yet significant role in the early care and education of young children. Nine percent of children under age one are cared for by family child care providers, while 6 percent are cared for by nannies or babysitters in the child's home. The percentage of children using family child care providers increases to 14 percent by age one and remains steady through ages two and three. By age four, the percentage declines significantly to 7 percent. The percentage using family child care providers declines again at age five to 5 percent (not a significant difference from the percentage seen at age four but significantly lower than the percentage seen at age three). The use of nannies or babysitters does not change significantly throughout the years before children enter school, with fewer than one of ten young children using nannies or babysitters as a primary arrangement for each of the ages examined.

Thus, over the early years, children experience a pronounced shift in their likelihood of being in nonparental care and in the primary type of nonparental care arrangements used. Children younger than age three are less likely than older children to be in nonparental arrangements and, when they are, relatives are most often chosen as the primary caretakers. By age three and continuing through age five, how-

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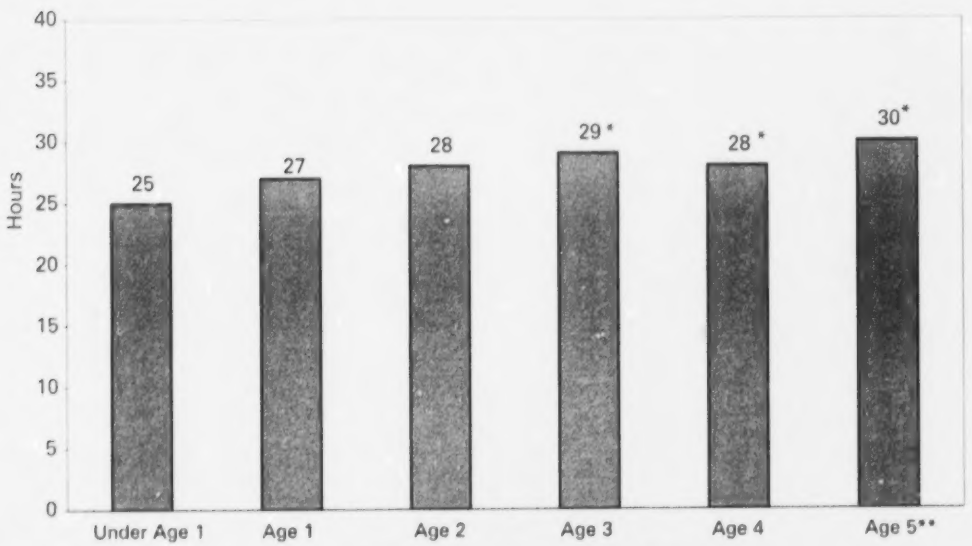
ever, children experience a significant increase in their use of nonparental care and, in particular, in the use of center-based arrangements. Children use family child care providers, nannies, and babysitters as primary nonparental arrangements at a stable but lower rate than center-based, relative, and parent-only care.

Hours in Nonparental Care

The average number of hours young children spend across all their regular nonparental arrangements—that is, the primary arrangement plus any other arrangements used for fewer hours each week—increases as children get older (figure 4), particularly when comparing the very youngest to the oldest children in the age range.[15] For example, children under age one spend 25 hours per week in nonparental care compared with 30 hours per week for five-year-olds. This increase in hours, however, is seen very gradually across the age range, such that the differences between each age (for example, hours at age one versus hours at age two, hours at age two versus hours at age three) are not statistically significant (although a further comparison of hours reveals that the youngest children—under age one—spend fewer hours in care than three-, four-, and five-year-olds).

Examining the changes across ages in the percentage of all children in full-time regular care (35 hours or more per week, again combining across the hours spent in

Figure 4. Average Hours Spent Each Week in Nonparental Arrangements for Children Five and Younger and Not in School, by Child's Age (1997)



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Based on t-tests and statistically significant at $p<.05$, the average hours differ from the average hours for children under age 1.

**Children who are age 5 and in school are not included in this estimate.

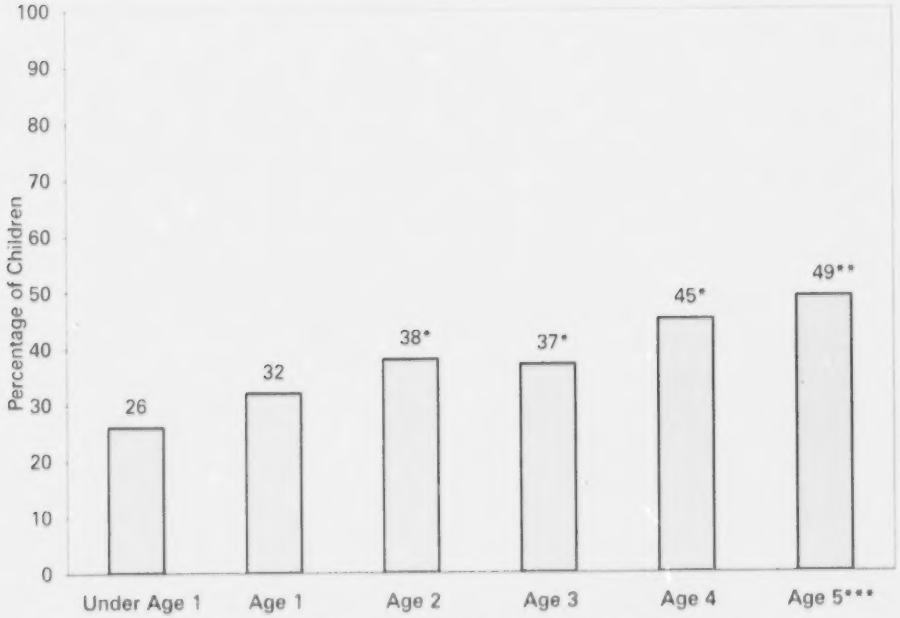
the primary and all other arrangements) reveals that fewer than one of five children under age one (18 percent) are in full-time care (appendix table A2). By age one, there is a significant increase in the percentage of children in full-time care (29 percent). This proportion does not increase significantly across subsequent years. However, comparing the very youngest (under age one) to the oldest in the age range, an increase in full-time care is seen, as more than one of three (36 percent) five-year-olds not yet in school are in full-time care.

Thus, children spend more time in nonparental care as they get older, both in terms of the average hours in nonparental care and in the percentage of children in full-time care. However, the increase is gradual across the years, with the difference significant only when contrasting the very youngest children (under age one) with the oldest (five-year-olds not yet in school) rather than across incremental years.

Number of Nonparental Arrangements

The percentage of children using two or more regular nonparental arrangements rises steadily with age (see figure 5), with the increase seen most clearly, as above, when contrasting the very youngest and oldest children. Slightly more than one of

Figure 5. Percentage of Children Age Five and Younger and Not in School Using Two or More Nonparental Arrangements, by Child's Age (1997)



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Based on t-tests and statistically significant at $p<.05$, the percentage differs from the percentage for children under age 1.

**Based on t-tests and statistically significant at $p<.05$, the percentage differs from the percentages for children under age 1 and children age 3.

***Children who are age 5 and in school are not included in this estimate.

four children under age one (26 percent) use two or more arrangements; this proportion rises to over a third of the children at ages two (38 percent) and three (37 percent), and rises again to almost half of the children at age five (49 percent).

Summary of Age Changes in Nonparental Care

Children under age three are cared for primarily by their parents and relatives although a smaller but notable percentage use primarily center-based care and family child care. As children get older, they are more likely to be cared for in center-based care settings than any other type of nonparental care. By age five, among children not yet in school, a minority are cared for only by parents. Children gradually spend more hours in nonparental care and, by the time they are ready to enter school, almost half of five-year-olds spend time in two or more nonparental arrangements. These developmental trends are likely a function of many factors, including parents' concern that children have experiences that will prepare them for school. Other influences may be the accessibility, affordability, and quality of care options for children of different ages, as well as the employment status of the responding parents and the availability of resources to pay for nonparental care. In the next section, we take a closer look at two related factors—employment and income—that may influence children's exposure to and time spent in nonparental arrangements.

Patterns of Early Care and Education by Employment and Income

Parental employment and household income are two interrelated factors that influence a family's need for and access to nonparental care. Income, in part, affects the range of nonparental care settings and quality that families can afford, and it determines a family's eligibility for child care subsidies. Employment of the responding parent is associated with the hours and schedule of care used and also directly influences family income. Nevertheless, as will be shown in the following section, many children use nonparental care even when their responding parent is not employed, especially from age three to age five. Thus, early care and education has a role in children's lives beyond its support for parental employment. As will be shown, this role is shaped, in part, by family income.

In this final set of analyses, employment of the responding parent and household income are jointly examined as they relate to children's participation in early care and education. The analyses focus on four types of families grouped by their household income and the employment status of the responding parent: (1) families with low incomes (under 200 percent of the federal poverty level [FPL])[16] and a responding parent who is not employed; (2) families with higher incomes (at or above 200 percent of FPL) and a responding parent who is not employed; (3) families with low

incomes and a responding parent who is employed; and (4) families with higher incomes and a responding parent who is employed. As shown earlier in this paper, a child's age is related to patterns of early care and education. Thus, separate analyses will be conducted for infants and toddlers (age two and younger) and older children (age three to age five and not yet in school).[17]

To preview the findings, the following sections show that nonparental care is used extensively, especially for older children, even when children's responding parents are not employed. Among children with nonemployed responding parents, income is strongly related to participation in nonparental care. Higher family income is related to a greater likelihood of using any nonparental care, and a greater likelihood of being in center-based care. Additionally, when children from low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent use nonparental care, their responding parent is likely to be looking for work or in school (i.e., engaging in work-related activities). This is much less likely to be the case for children using nonparental care from higher-income families with a nonemployed responding parent. The main points in this section are highlighted to assist the reader in following the multiple comparisons presented.

Employment, Income, and Primary Arrangements for Infants and Toddlers

(Figure 6, appendix table 3)

- **Parental employment is strongly related to the likelihood that infants and toddlers will use nonparental care.**

Infants and toddlers from families in which the responding parent is *employed* are more than twice as likely to use nonparental care as those from families in which the responding parent is *not employed*, regardless of household income.

- **While fewer infants and toddlers in families with a *nonemployed* responding parent use nonparental care, the percentages in care are still substantial.**

More than one in three infants and toddlers with *nonemployed* responding parents regularly spend time in nonparental care.

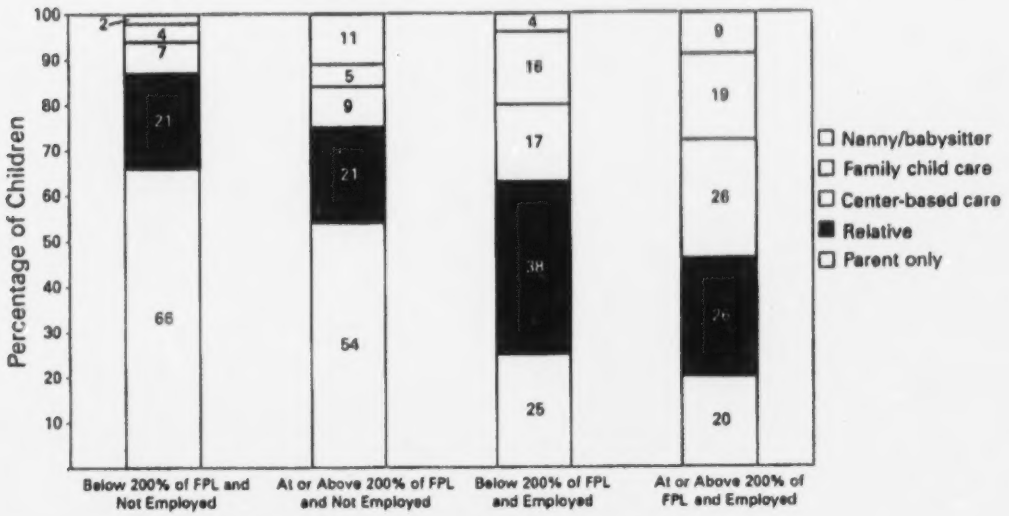
- **Income is related to the likelihood that infants and toddlers in families with a responding parent who is *not employed* will use nonparental care.**

Infants and toddlers in higher-income families with a *nonemployed* responding parent are more likely (46 percent) to use nonparental care than children in low-income families with a *nonemployed* responding parent (34 percent).

- **Relative care is the most commonly used primary arrangement for infants and toddlers with a responding parent who is *not employed*.**

Both groups of infants and toddlers with a *nonemployed* responding parent, irrespective of household income, use relative care (21 percent for both groups) more than other primary arrangements.

Figure 6. **Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children Age Two and Younger, by Income and Responding Parent Employment Status (1997)**



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistical comparisons of these estimates are presented in table A3.
FPL = federal poverty level.

Employment, Income, and Primary Arrangements for Three- to Five-Year-Olds

(Figure 7, appendix table A3)

- **Among three- to five-year-olds, participation in nonparental care is extensive, even when the child's responding parent is *not employed*.**

Three of four children (74 percent) from higher-income families with a responding parent who is *not employed* regularly use nonparental care. The proportion using nonparental care is smaller (55 percent) for children from low-income families with a responding parent who is *not employed*. Both of these percentages for three- to five-year-old children in nonparental care are significantly higher than those seen for infants and toddlers.

- **Three- to five-year-old children from higher-income families are more likely than children from low-income families to use center-based care, regardless of whether the child's responding parent is employed.**

More than half of children from higher-income families use center-based care as their primary arrangement (55 percent, both for children with a *nonemployed* and for children with an *employed* responding parent).

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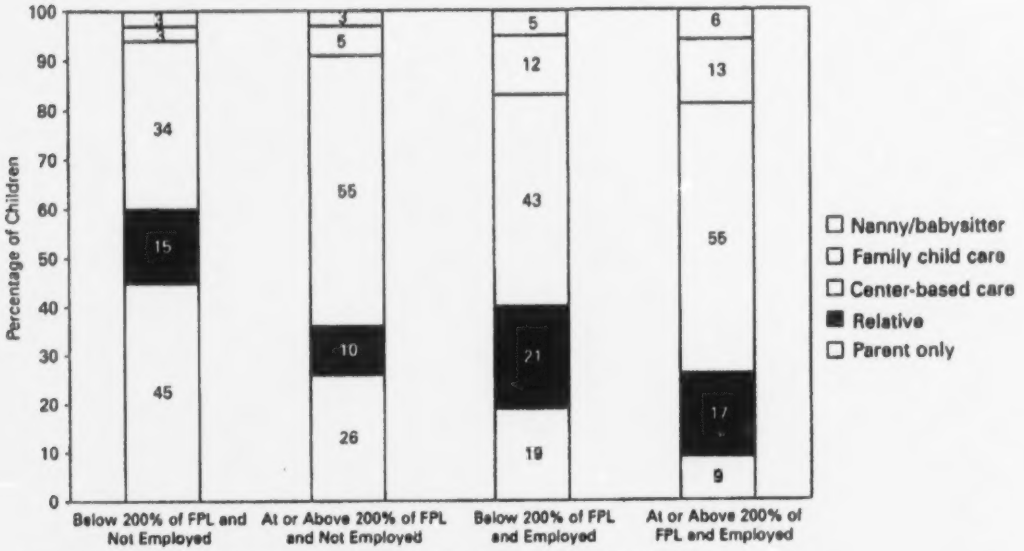
Figure 7. **Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children Ages Three to Five and Not in School, by Income and Responding Parent Employment Status (1997)**



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistical comparisons of these estimates are presented in table A3.
FPL = federal poverty level.
Percentages do not sum to 100 as a result of rounding.

- **Three- to five-year-old children from low-income families with a responding parent who is *not employed* are the least likely group of three- to five-year-olds to use center-based care as their primary arrangement.**

About one in three children (34 percent) from low-income families with a *non-employed* responding parent use center-based care as a primary care arrangement. A somewhat higher percentage (43 percent) of children from lower-income families with an *employed* responding parent use center-based care.

Employment, Income, and the Hours of Nonparental Care

(Figure 8, appendix table A3)

- **Employment status of the responding parent is, not surprisingly, strongly associated with the average hours children spend in nonparental care.**

Infants and toddlers with an *employed* responding parent spend over twice as many hours in nonparental care (30 hours for children from low-income families and 32 hours for children from higher-income families) as young children with a *nonemployed* responding parent (13 hours for children from low-income families and 13 hours for children from higher-income families).

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A similar pattern exists for three- to five-year-olds. Among three- to five-year-olds with a *nonemployed* responding parent, however, income is also associated with the average hours spent in nonparental care. Three- to five-year-olds from a low-income family with a *nonemployed* responding parent spend 20 hours per week in nonparental care, compared with 15 hours per week for children from a higher-income family with a *nonemployed* responding parent.

- **Children with an employed responding parent are more likely than other children to use full-time care.**

Infants and toddlers with an *employed* responding parent are much more likely than children with a *nonemployed* responding parent to spend 35 or more hours per week in nonparental care (4 and 5 percent for children from low- and higher-income families with a *nonemployed* responding parent versus 36 and 41 percent for children from low- and higher-income families with an *employed* responding parent).

Similarly, three- to five-year-old children with an *employed* responding parent are more likely to spend 35 or more hours per week in nonparental care (11 and 9 percent for children from low- and higher-income families with a *nonemployed* responding parent vs. 43 and 46 percent for children from low- and higher-income families with an *employed* responding parent).

Employment, Income, and the Number of Nonparental Arrangements

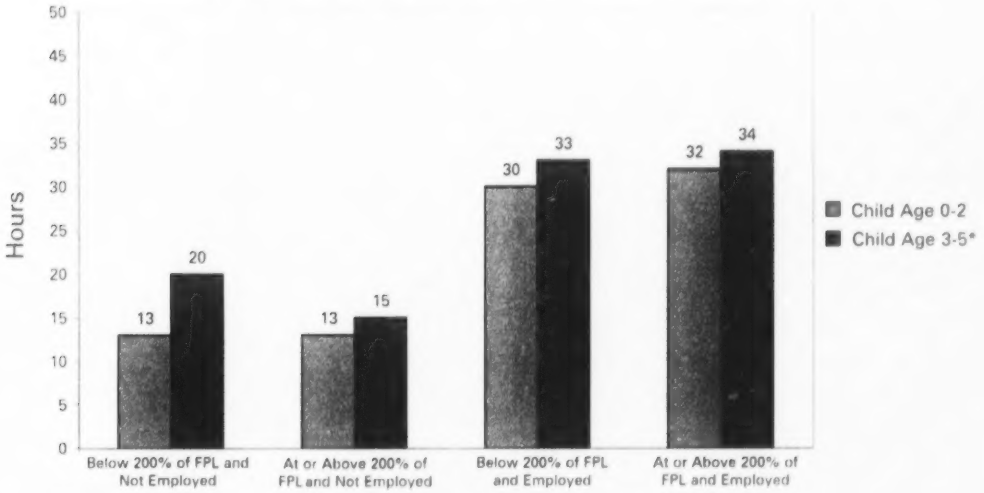
(Figure 9, appendix table A3)

- **Income and employment status are not strongly related to the likelihood that young children will be in two or more nonparental arrangements.**

Among infants and toddlers, children from higher-income families are similarly likely (about one in three) to use two or more arrangements, regardless of the employment status of their responding parent. About one-quarter of infants and toddlers from low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent and 30 percent with an employed responding parent (not a statistically significant difference) use two or more nonparental arrangements.

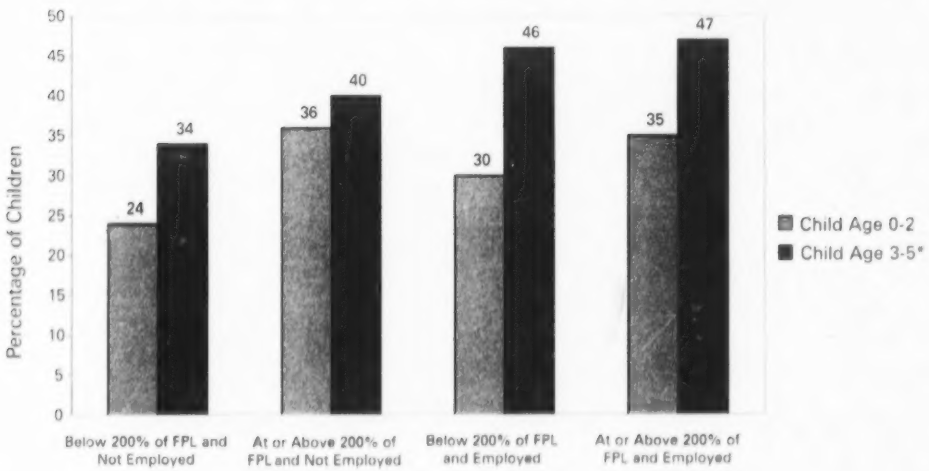
Three- to five-year-olds from low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent (34 percent) are less likely than children with an employed responding parent, regardless of household income (46 percent for children from low-income families and 47 percent for children from higher-income families), to use two or more arrangements.

Figure 8. **Average Hours Spent in Nonparental Care by Children Age Five and Younger and Not in School, by Income and Responding Parent Employment Status (1997)**



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistical comparisons of these estimates are presented in table A3.
FPL = federal poverty level.
*Children who are age 5 and in school are not included in these estimates.

Figure 9. **Percentage of Children Age Five and Younger and Not in School Using Two or More Nonparental Arrangements, by Income and Responding Parent Employment Status (1997)**



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistical comparisons of these estimates are presented in table A3.
FPL = federal poverty level.
*Children who are age 5 and in school are not included in these estimates.

Special Focus: Work-Related Activities of Nonemployed Responding Parents

A number of children have responding parents who are not employed but may be engaging in work-related activities such as a job search or school.[18] Parents may need to find nonparental care for their children during these activities. In the 1997 NSAF, 41 percent of the children age five and under who are not yet in school have a responding parent who is not employed. In this section, we examine the extent to which the nonemployed responding parents of these children report that they are participating in work-related activities during the hours their children are in nonparental care.[19]

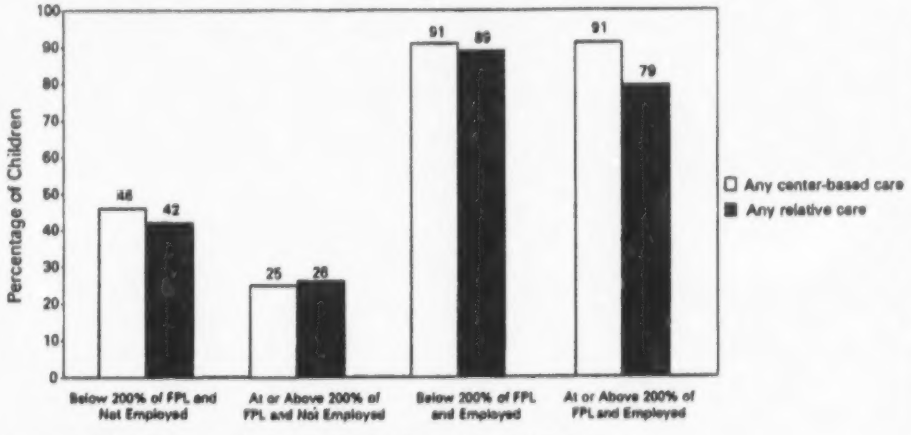
To simplify the analyses, the focus is narrowed to the two most frequently used nonparental care arrangements—center-based care and relative care for all children age five and under and not yet in school.[20] We examine the extent to which children using any center-based care and relative care (regardless of whether the care is used for the most hours each week) have a responding parent engaged in work-related activities while they are in care. The purpose of these analyses is to better understand the complex role that nonparental care plays in the lives of children and families, particularly among families that are constrained in various ways because of their income or employment patterns.

Figure 10 shows that household income is strongly related to participation in work-related activities among nonemployed responding parents while children are in nonparental care (appendix table A4). Only 25 percent of children from higher-income families using any center-based care had their responding parent report that they were engaged in work-related activities while their children were in care, compared with nearly half (46 percent) of children from low-income families.

The patterns for relative care use for the children of nonemployed responding parents are similar to those seen for center-based care. Twenty-six percent of children from higher-income families using any relative care had their responding parent report that they were engaged in work-related activities while their children were in care, compared with 42 percent of children from low-income families.

Thus, in some cases nonparental care appears to serve as a support for work-related activities, particularly for low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent.[21] Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the majority of care for children from low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent is used while the responding parent is not participating in work-related activities.

Figure 10. Percentage of Children with a Responding Parent Reporting That She or He Was "Working, Looking for Work, or in School" While the Child Was in Any Center Care and Any Relative Care, by Income and Responding Parent Employment Status, 1997*



Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistical comparisons of these estimates are presented in table A4.
*All children age 5 and under and not yet in school are included in these estimates.
FPL = federal poverty level.

Summary of Employment and Income Patterns

Adding the lens of employment and income allows for a more differentiated picture of the developmental trends in early care and education examined earlier in this paper. Employment is clearly linked with use of nonparental care and hours spent in care, although it is not the only basis for using such care. Further, family income moderates the patterns. The divergences between low- and higher-income families are most clear for older children. Three- to five-year-olds from low-income families are less likely than those from higher-income families to be in nonparental care, and they are less likely to use center-based care as a primary arrangement. When their responding parent is not employed, children from low-income families are the least likely of the four groups of children examined here (low- and higher-income children with employed and nonemployed responding parents) to be in nonparental care and, in particular, center-based care.[22] However, when they are in nonparental care, they spend about an hour more per day in care (assuming a five-day child care week) than children from higher-income families with a responding parent who is not employed.

A closer look at responding parents' work and work-related activities and their children's use of nonparental care reveals distinct patterns that vary according to family income. *Nonemployed* responding parents in low-income families were significantly more likely than *nonemployed* parents in higher-income families to report that they were engaged in work-related activities while their children were in center-based care and relative care. Given that center-based care is more expensive than other forms of care, it is possible that the greater participation in work-related activities among the low-income *nonemployed* responding parents is related to participation in welfare-to-work programs and/or use of child care subsidies that allow families greater access to this more expensive form of nonparental care. Still, only about one-third of three- to five-year-old children of low-income *nonemployed* responding parents use center-based care as a primary arrangement, suggesting that lack of financial resources or accessible facilities make center-based care an unattainable option for many of these families (Growing Up in Poverty Project 2000). Alternatively, these children may have responding parents who are not working because they prefer to care for their children themselves.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper highlight several important aspects of early care and education in the United States. First, nonparental care settings are a part of children's daily lives, beginning in the first year for many and becoming even more prominent as children near school entry. Children are more likely to participate in nonparental care settings when their responding parent is employed. However, even when their responding parent is not employed, many children participate in nonparental care settings. These results highlight the dual role of early care and education in the lives of children and families—as both a support for parental employment and employment preparation and, especially for children age three and older, as an opportunity

to participate in settings with social and educational resources that can prepare them for school.

Given the potential importance of nonparental care experiences for children, particularly experiences in center-based care settings, it is noteworthy that participation in center-based care is highly associated with household income and employment status of the responding parent. Children from higher-income families use center-based care far more than children from low-income families, with this difference particularly marked when the responding parent is not employed. Importantly, the National Household Education Survey documents that, in addition to family income and parental employment status, race/ethnicity and maternal education are further factors associated with preschoolers' participation in center-based programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

The results in this paper, while not a complete picture, demonstrate potential opportunities and constraints faced by low-income families as they arrange nonparental care for their young children. The cost of nonparental care, particularly of center-based care, may be prohibitive, thus accounting for the lower use of center-based care among all children from low-income families, but particularly among low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent.[23] Alternatively, low-income families may choose to forgo employment for one parent so that the parent can care for children in the family (thus accounting for the higher percentage of children from low-income families with a nonemployed responding parent in parent-only care, compared with such children from higher-income families). Another potential issue is uneven availability of child care centers and preschools for families in different communities, which limits the choice of center-based care for some families (Growing Up in Poverty Project 2000). However, despite the low overall percentage of children of low-income, nonemployed responding parents in center-based care, the sizable percentage of those parents reporting that they are looking for work or are in school suggests that participation in work-related activities may offer access to subsidies and allow the use of this more expensive form of nonparental care. Thus, while child care subsidies can be used for any type of care a parent chooses (including care by relatives, neighbors, and friends), eligibility for child care assistance is a potentially important avenue for low-income families to gain access to center-based programs. While such programs have been documented to vary substantially in quality, recent findings indicate that even with this variation taken into account, participation in a formal care setting fosters cognitive development (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2000). Eligibility for state prekindergarten and Head Start programs that is not dependent on parental employment status is another important route through which three- to five-year-old low-income children can be exposed to structured group settings that may enhance their preparation for formal school.

The data presented here also highlight the diversity of parents using nonparental care for their young children. Even when family financial resources are less constrained, parents use a variety of care settings for their children, including relative care, family child care, and parent-only care. While conclusions cannot be drawn here about the reasons parents use different types of care and the extent to which choices of care reflect preferences or constraints, our findings demonstrate the broad array of providers caring for young children in the United States.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that, while these analyses provide a rich, descriptive look at the use of nonparental care among certain groups of families, the analyses are not sufficient for demonstrating how a variety of demographic, cultural, and contextual factors are simultaneously related to patterns of early care and education for young children. Further multivariate analyses are necessary for exploring patterns in greater depth.

Appendix—Tables

Table A1. Characteristics of Children Age 5 and Younger and Not in School, by Income and Employment Status of the Responding Parent, 1997

	All 0-5 Year Olds, Not in School		Income				Employment Status of the Responding Parent			
			Below 200% FPL		At or Above 200% FPL		Not Employed		Employed	
	sample size=8,844		sample size=4,972		sample size=3,872		sample size=3,401		sample size=5,443	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child Age										
0	17	0.7	17	0.9	18	1.3	21	1.3	15	0.9
1	16	0.8	14	0.8	17	1.2	14	1.0	17	1.0
2	21	0.8	20	1.3	21	1.2	22	1.5	20	1.0
3	17	0.6	18	1.0	15	0.9	17	1.2	16	0.8
4	20	0.8	20	0.9	19	1.3	18	1.1	21	1.2
5	10	0.6	11	1.0	10	1.0	9	1.0	11	0.9
Child's Race										
White non-Hispanic	63	0.4	48	1.2	77	1.1	60	1.3	66	1.0
Black non-Hispanic	15	0.3	20	0.9	10	0.8	13	1.0	16	0.8
Hispanic	18	0.1	28	0.8	9	0.6	23	1.0	14	0.7
Other, non-Hispanic	4	0.3	5	0.5	4	0.5	4	0.7	4	0.5
Family Income										
Below 50% of FPL	11	0.6	23	1.3	–	–	20	1.3	4	0.5
50-99% of FPL	12	0.6	26	1.2	–	–	17	1.2	9	0.6
100-199% of FPL	24	0.8	51	1.3	–	–	24	1.1	24	1.1
At or above 200% of FPL	53	1.0	–	–	100	0.0	39	1.8	63	1.3
Family Structure										
Single parent	24	0.8	40	1.2	10	0.8	25	1.5	23	1.0
Two parents	76	0.8	60	1.2	90	0.8	75	1.5	77	1.0
MKA Employment										
Nonemployed	41	1.1	53	1.5	30	1.6	100	0.0	–	–
Employed part-time	17	0.8	14	0.9	18	1.3	–	–	28	1.3
Employed full-time	43	1.1	33	1.3	52	1.7	–	–	72	1.3
MKA Education										
Less than a high school diploma	14	0.7	26	1.2	3	0.5	22	1.4	8	0.5
High school diploma	62	1.2	66	1.4	58	1.7	60	1.9	63	1.3
College degree	24	1.1	8	0.8	39	1.7	17	1.7	29	1.2

Source: Child Trends calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families
FPL = federal poverty level
MKA = most knowledgeable adult

Table A2. Child Care for Children 0 to 5 Years Old and Not in School, 1997

Primary Arrangement and Average Hours		All 0-5 Year Olds, Not in School		Under 1 Year Olds		All 1 Year Olds		All 2 Year Olds		All 3 Year Olds		All 4 Year Olds		All 5 Year Olds, Not in School	
		sample size = 8,844		sample size = 1,373		sample size = 1,341		sample size = 1,635		sample size = 1,722		sample size = 1,866		sample size = 908	
		Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Center-based[a,b,c]		30	1.0	10	1.8	18	2.5	21	1.9	30	1.9	53	2.4	61	3.5
	Average hours	26	0.5	32	2.0	30	2.3	28	1.5	31	1.3	23	0.8	29	1.2
Family child care[a,c]		11	0.8	9	1.3	14	2.1	14	2.0	14	2.0	7	1.1	5	1.8
	Average hours	29	1.2	28	2.9	27	2.9	30	2.7	26	2.8	27	1.9	–	–
Relative care[a]		22	0.8	29	2.2	29	2.4	21	1.5	19	1.5	17	1.6	14	2.3
	Average hours	20	0.7	18	1.4	21	1.4	20	1.8	20	1.7	21	1.9	23	2.8
Nanny/babysitter		6	0.5	6	1.4	9	1.5	6	1.2	6	1.0	4	0.8	4	1.3
	Average hours	17	1.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Parent-only[a,b,c,d]		31	1.1	46	2.1	30	2.4	38	2.7	31	2.3	19	2.0	16	2.9
Hours in Nonparental Care															
None		31	1.1	46	2.1	30	2.4	38	2.7	31	2.3	19	2.0	16	2.9
1 to 14		22	0.8	21	2.1	24	2.1	21	2.2	21	2.0	22	1.8	22	3.3
15 to 34		20	0.9	15	1.9	17	2.1	15	1.4	19	1.9	28	2.5	27	2.8
35 or more*		28	1.1	18	1.9	29	2.1	27	2.3	29	2.4	31	2.3	36	3.8
Among children in nonparental care:															
Mean Hours in Nonparental Arrangements**		29 hours	0.5	25 hours	1.4	27 hours	1.2	28 hours	1.4	29 hours	1.3	28 hours	1.0	30 hours	1.4
Number of Nonparental Arrangements															
One		62%	1.3	74%	2.9	68%	2.7	62%	3.4	63%	2.7	55%	2.3	51%	3.9
Two or more***		38%	1.3	26%	2.9	32%	2.7	38%	3.4	37%	2.7	45%	2.3	49%	3.9

Source: Child Trends' calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at $p<.05$ are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = children under age 1 and age 1, b = children age 1 and age 2, c = children age 2 and age 3, d = children age 3 and age 4, e = children age 4 and age 5.

*Based on t-tests and significant at $p<.05$, the percentages of children age 1, age 2, age 3, age 4, and age 5 in nonparental care for 35 or more hours per week differ from the percentage of children under age 1 in nonparental care for 35 or more hours per week.

**Based on t-tests and significant at $p<.05$, the average hours for children age 3, age 4, and age 5 differ from the average hours for children Under age 1.

***Based on t-tests and significant at $p<.05$, the percentages of children age 2, age 3, age 4, and age 5 with two or more arrangements differ from the percentage of children Under age 1 with two or more arrangements. The percentage of children age 5 with two or more arrangements also differs from the percentage of children age 3 with two or more arrangements.

Percentages do not always sum to 100 due to rounding.

Average hours in the primary arrangement were not calculated if the cell size was less than 100. Tests were not conducted to determine if the average hours in each *primary* arrangement were significantly different across ages.

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Table A3. Child Care for Children Age 5 and Younger and Not in School, by Income and Responding Parent's Employment Status, 1997

	Below 200% of FPL and Not Employed		At or Above 200% of FPL and Not Employed		Below 200% of FPL and Employed		At or Above 200% of FPL and Employed	
	sample size = 2,375		sample size = 1,026		sample size = 2,597		sample size = 2,846	
All 0 to 5 Year Olds, Not in School	Estimate	Standard	Estimate	Standard	Estimate	Standard	Estimate	Standard
Primary Arrangement	(%)	Error	(%)	Error	(%)	Error	(%)	Error
Center-based [a,b,c,e,f]	19	1.2	28	2.5	31	1.5	39	2.0
Family child care [b,c,e,f]	3	0.6	5	1.6	14	1.3	16	1.5
Relative care [b,c,e]	18	1.4	17	2.2	29	1.4	22	1.4
Nanny/babysitter [a,b,e,f]	2	0.6	8	1.6	5	0.8	8	0.9
Parent-only [a,b,c,d,e,f]	56	1.9	43	3.2	22	1.5	15	1.6
Hours in Nonparental Care								
None	56	1.9	43	3.2	22	1.5	15	1.6
1 to 14	24	1.9	40	2.7	17	1.4	15	1.2
15 to 34	13	1.2	11	1.6	21	1.6	27	1.7
35 or more [b,c,e,f]	7	1.0	7	1.2	40	1.8	43	2.1
Among children in nonparental care:								
Number of Nonparental Arrangements								
One	70	2.7	62	4.5	61	2.0	59	2.0
Two or more [b,f]	30	2.7	38	4.5	39	2.0	41	2.0
Mean Hours in Nonparental Arrangements	17 hours	1.1	14 hours	0.9	32 hours	0.7	33 hours	0.8
0 to 2 Year Olds								
Primary Arrangement								
Center-based [b,c,d,e,f]	7	1.3	9	2.2	17	1.9	26	2.7
Family child care [b,c,e,f]	4	1.0	5	1.7	16	1.8	19	2.1
Relative care [b,d,e]	21	2.1	21	3.3	38	2.6	26	2.0
Nanny/babysitter [a,d,e,f]	2	0.9	11	2.7	4	1.1	9	1.2
Parent-only [a,b,c,d,f]	66	2.6	54	4.3	25	2.1	20	2.6
Hours in Nonparental Care								
None	66	2.6	54	4.3	25	2.1	19	2.6
1 to 14	23	2.5	36	3.7	19	1.9	16	1.8
15 to 34	7	1.2	5	1.2	20	2.1	24	2.1
35 and more [b,c,e,f]	4	1.0	5	1.7	36	2.2	41	2.7
Among children in nonparental care:								
Number of Nonparental Arrangements								
One	76	3.6	64	5.8	70	2.3	65	2.7
Two or more [f]	24	3.6	36	5.8	30	2.3	35	2.7
Mean Hours in Nonparental Arrangements [b,c,e,f]	13 hours	1.2	13 hours	1.7	30 hours	1.0	32 hours	1.1
3 to 5 Year Olds Not in School								
Primary Arrangement								
Center-based [a,b,c,e,f]	34	2.6	55	3.9	43	2.3	55	2.6
Family child care [b,c,f]	3	0.9	5	3.1	12	1.9	13	1.9
Relative care [b,c,e]	15	2.0	10	2.4	21	1.8	17	1.8
Nanny/babysitter	3	0.8	3	1.0	5	1.1	6	1.4
Parent-only [a,b,c,e,f]	45	2.9	26	3.5	19	2.3	9	1.7
Hours in Nonparental Care								
None	44	2.9	26	3.4	19	2.2	9	1.7
1 to 14	25	2.3	46	4.1	15	2.0	14	1.7
15 to 34	20	2.3	19	3.0	23	2.4	31	2.6
35 and more [b,c,e,f]	11	1.7	9	1.9	43	2.7	46	2.7
Among children in nonparental care:								
Number of Nonparental Arrangements								
One	66	3.6	60	6.1	54	3.1	53	2.6
Two or more [b,f]	34	3.6	40	6.1	46	3.1	47	2.6
Mean Hours in Nonparental Arrangements [a,b,c,e,f]	20 hours	1.5	15 hours	1.1	33 hours	1.1	34 hours	1.1

Source: Child Trends' calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at $p<.05$ are noted for the following comparisons of estimates:
a = below 200% of FPL/not employed and at or above 200% of FPL/not employed
b = below 200% of FPL/not employed and below 200% of FPL/employed
c = at or above 200% of FPL/not employed and at or above 200% of FPL/employed
d = at or above 200% of FPL/not employed and below 200% of FPL/employed
e = below 200% of FPL/employed and at or above 200% of FPL/employed
f = below 200% of FPL/not employed and at or above 200% of FPL/employed

FPL = federal poverty level.

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Table A4. Percentage of Children with a Responding Parent Reporting That She or He Was Working, Looking for Work, or in School While Child Was in Any Nonparental Care, Any Center-Based Care, and Any Relative Care, 1997

All 0 to 5 Year Olds, Not in School	Income/Employment Status							
	Below 200% of FPL and Not Employed sample size =2,375		At or Above 200% of FPL and Not Employed sample size =1,026		Below 200% of FPL and Employed sample size =2,597		At or Above 200% of FPL and Employed sample size =2,846	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Use of Any Nonparental Care								
Yes [a,b,c,d,e,f]	44	1.9	57	3.2	78	1.5	85	1.6
No	56	1.9	43	3.2	22	1.5	15	1.6
Working While Using Any Nonparental Care								
Yes [a,b,c,d,e,f]	44	2.5	26	3.5	95	0.8	93	0.9
No	56	2.5	74	3.5	5	0.8	7	0.9
Use of Any Center-Based Care								
Yes [a,b,c,d,e,f]	22	1.2	31	2.8	37	1.6	48	1.8
No	78	1.2	69	2.8	63	1.6	52	1.8
Working While Using Any Center Care								
Yes [a,b,c,d,e,f]	46	3.0	25	4.6	91	1.5	91	1.9
No	54	3.0	75	4.6	9	1.5	9	1.9
Use of Any Relative Care								
Yes [b,c,d,e,f]	23	1.6	22	2.9	39	1.5	33	1.6
No	77	1.6	78	2.9	61	1.5	67	1.6
Working While Using Any Relative Care								
Yes [a,b,c,d,e,f]	42	3.9	26	5.4	89	1.7	79	2.4
No	58	3.9	74	5.4	11	1.7	21	2.4

Source: Child Trends' calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at $p<.05$ are noted for the following comparisons of estimates.
a = below 200% of FPL/not employed and at or above 200% of FPL/not employed.
b = below 200% of FPL/not employed and below 200% of FPL/employed,
c = at or above 200% of FPL/not employed and at or above 200% of FPL/employed,
d =at or above 200% of FPL/not employed and below 200% of FPL/employed,
e = below 200% of FPL/employed and at or above 200% of FPL/employed,
f = below 200% of FPL/not employed and at or above 200% of FPL/employed.

FPL = federal poverty level.

Notes

1. The National Survey of America's Families collected data on the economic, health, and social characteristics of 44,461 households, yielding a sample of more than 100,000 people representative of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population under 65. Data were obtained on one or two respondent adults, the respondent's spouse or partner, and up to two focal children for each household. Representative samples of households were collected in 13 focus states plus the balance of the nation. The focus states are Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. The survey oversamples households with low incomes, defined as incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

2. The children in this sample include all children from birth through age five who have not yet entered school.

3. The Most Knowledgeable Adult (MKA) was a mother for 81 percent of the children and a father or other adult (stepparent, partner parent, or foster parent) for 19 percent of the children.

4. "Regularly" refers to care that occurred at least once a week for the last month. Because child care arrangements and hours spent in care can vary widely from the school year to the summer, the observations with data on child care relating to the summer months (June 12 to September 26) were not included in this analysis. The observations that are included are weighted to provide representative data on child care during the school year.

5. Note that the definition of "primary arrangement" in this report is slightly different from that used in previous ANF reports on child care. In those reports, the "primary arrangement" refers to the arrangement used for the most hours each week *if* the responding parent reports that she or he was "working, looking for work, or in school during any of the hours" the arrangement was used. In the present report, the primary arrangement refers more broadly to the arrangement that was used for the most hours each week, regardless of what the responding parent was doing while the child was in the arrangement. Using this broader definition of the primary arrangement generally results in lower percentages of children with parent-only care as their primary arrangement.

6. Questions about participation in before- and after-school programs were asked only for children who were two years old or older. Before- and after-school programs typically refer to arrangements that are used before or after a child's primary arrangement since none of the children examined in this report are in formal school.

7. If the MKA did not report the use of a nonparental arrangement, the child is assumed to be in parent-only care. The use of parent-only care should be viewed relative to the nonparental care options described in the paper and may reflect a number of situations including parents who are not employed and can care for a young child themselves as well as parents who care for a child while they work.

8. The average hours in care are computed only for those children in nonparental care. In contrast, the percentage of children in full-time care is based on a distribution of *all* children, including those who are in parent-only care.

9. In measuring the number of arrangements, a child could be cared for in two or more different center-based arrangements or by two or more different individuals inside or outside the child's home. The NSAF, however, captures only one arrangement in each category and therefore potentially undercounts the number of arrangements that are used for the child.

10. Throughout this paper, statistically significant differences were calculated in three ways. First, chi square tests were conducted to test whether overall *category* distributions on types of care, hours in care, and number of arrangements varied significantly. Second, analyses of variance (ANOVA) or t tests were used to determine whether mean hours in care for different groups were statistically significant. Follow-up t tests were conducted only when overall chi-squares or ANOVAs were statistically significant. Only differences that are significant at $p < .05$ or less are discussed in this paper.

11. Adult-child ratio and group size for different child care arrangements are available in the NSAF but are not examined in this report.

12. According to the 1995 NHES, for children age 5 and under and not yet in kindergarten, 41 percent were in parent only care, 26 percent were in center-based care, 17 percent were in relative care, 13 percent were in family child care, and 3 percent were in in-home care (comparable to nanny/babysitter). The NHES is a nationally representative survey of parents of children who were age 10 or younger and in third grade or below.

13. These age profiles of primary arrangement type, hours in care, and numbers of arrangements are point-in-time estimates derived for a cross-sectional sample. These trends do not represent *individual* year-by-year changes.

14. When interpreting this shift to center-based care, it is important to remember that many centers do not offer slots for infants or have limited infant care capabilities. Thus, the patterns seen may partly reflect the supply of care that is available for parents with very young children.

15. The average number of hours is computed only for those children in one or more nonparental care arrangements. Children using parent-only care are not included in the calculation of the mean.

16. The 1997 NSAF collected information about the family's income in 1996. In 1996, a family with two parents and two children and income less than $31,822 was classified as living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

17. Analyses looking at child's age year by year are not possible due to small sample sizes. Therefore, children were combined into two age groups.

18. Note that children with employed responding parents may also have a responding parent who engages in work-related activities, but they are not the focus of this analysis (see footnote 21 for additional information about employed responding parents who report they were not looking for work or in school while the child was using care).

19. The NSAF asks the responding parent whether they were "working, looking for work, or in school," during *any* of the hours they used each type of nonparental care. Because the analyses focus on children with responding parents who are *not* employed, it is assumed that an affirmative response to this question refers to the latter activities, "looking for work" or "in school."

20. Analyses by age group are not presented because of small sample sizes for some variables.

21. Not surprisingly, the majority of children with an employed responding parent (91 percent), irrespective of family income, have a responding parent who reports they were working, looking for work, or in school while their young child was in center-based care. Additionally, however, a substantial percentage of children have an employed responding parent who reports they were *not* working, looking for work, or in school while the child was using center-based care and, particularly for children from higher-income families, relative care. One possible explanation for these findings is that spending regular time with relatives is viewed as an important developmental experience for young children such that, even when they are not working or engaged in work-related activities, families are scheduling regular time for their children to spend with relatives.

22. To examine the hypothesis that the general patterns seen among low-income children (below 200 percent of FPL) may mask patterns that differ for children under 100 percent of FPL and at 100–199 percent of FPL, additional cross-tabulations (not presented here) were conducted. Differences in the likelihood of being in nonparental care or in the types of care used were not observed. Children below the federal poverty level with a nonemployed responding parent were, however, more likely to spend slightly more hours in nonparental care than children at 100–199 percent of FPL with a nonemployed responding parent.

23. Indeed, many low-income parents cite the cost of child care as a reason for not working.

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